



Baie Ternay Marine National Park

The Baie Ternay Marine National Park is situated on the North West coast of Mahé in the Port Glaud district, and borders the Morne Seychellois National Park. The Park is a living national treasure containing an array of ecosystems, from wetlands, sea grass beds, mud flats, rocky shores to coral reefs.

It also has one of the largest shallow sea grass beds on Mahé, which acts as a nursery for many species, including squid, a staple food for many fish, as well as being a favorite resting place for the Feathertail Stingray.

Geology

Baie Ternay Marine National Park is part of the massive granite fragments of the ancient supercontinent Gondwanaland that broke up about 180 million years ago. What remains have been sculptured by centuries of trade winds into fantastic shapes, supporting a variety of plants and animals.



History

The Name Baie Ternay comes from Chevalier Charles Louis D'Arzac de Ternay, a well-known French administrator (1771-1776) from Ile de France (Mauritius) and Bourbon (Reunion). The name Baie Ternay is often used interchangeably with Cap Ternay, the original name of the headland currently referred to as Cap or Pointe Matoopa at the most westerly point of Mahé - although the origin of the name Matoopa remains a mystery.



On the 11th June 1979, Baie Ternay was designated as a Marine National Park because of its natural, economic and cultural importance to the Seychelles people. At only 80 hectares (0.8 kilometers square), the Marine National Park is nearly half the size of neighbouring Port Launay Marine National Park. Yet despite its smaller size, it supports a diverse array of marine habitats including coral reefs reaching depths of nearly 40 meters.





What to do?

Baie Ternay Marine Park has been ranked amongst the most beautiful reefs in the world. This marine park is a renowned foraging ground for juvenile green turtles and hawksbill turtles. The marine life is excellent, it's worth a boat trip to view the reef; a perfect place for snorkelers and divers.

For those who enjoy bird watching, at the Baie Ternay mud flat during low tide, there is a combination of spectacular birdlife such as native species and waders; for example, Turnstone colony resting on rocks, Curlew Sandpipers, Common Greenshank, Grey herons, Striated heron feeding on the mud flat and flying over are the amazing white-tailed tropical birds.

How to get there?

This park can be reached by land or sea, you can make your booking via local licensed boat charters and operators on Beau-Vallon Beach, and the Port Launay dive operators offer excursions to suit the needs of visitors and this service often includes barbecues and snorkeling.

Flora and Fauna

In addition to its rich history and socio-cultural importance, there is something quite untamed about the Park, whether it's forest, rich mangrove and open marshes or the dazzling patchwork of the coral reefs, it hosts many species of plants and animals found only in the Seychelles, which are considered to be endemic.

Mangroves

Mangroves are the only trees that have evolved to live in salty and muddy environments. They are extremely useful ecosystems, providing excellent nurseries for important fish and bird species. The original mangrove forest at Baie Ternay may well have supported a population of indigenous saltwater Crocodiles, before the early settlers hunted them to extinction.

In addition to being ecologically important, mangroves help to stabilize the coastline from the impacts of coastal erosion. The mangrove forest at Baie Ternay cover a small area of about 3 hectares. The Baie Ternay mangrove have a high diversity: recently it has been documented that there are seven species of mangrove existing in the Seychelles, from intertidal exposed sands to the more stable inland zone, with varying levels of salinity.





Marine Life

Invertebrate fauna within the bays include razor clams, cones, sea urchins, and sea cucumbers while fish assemblages include emperors, mullet fish, wrasses, damselfish as well as sting rays, with a high proportion of juveniles being observed. These organisms are vital as food sources for many fish and bird species.

The beach and shallow water dwelling fish and bird species are an appealing attraction as a nursery for many juvenile fish species that later move to seagrass and coral habitats. Baie Ternay was once recognized as one of three areas with highest coral diversity in the entire inner island group of Seychelles and had the highest diversity in the western half of the group. In 1998 coral cover was reduced to 5% as a result of a mass coral bleaching event. Despite this traumatic event, the reefs had shown recovery to approximately 60 % by 2013 - the highest level for any coral reef along the northwest coast of Mahé.

Seagrass Meadows



Courtesy: SIF

Baie Ternay is characterized by extensive seagrasses meadows, with small coral colonies scattered along the seaward limit. It represents approximately 3% of the seagrass cover of Mahé and occupies approximately 12 hectares, accounting for almost half of the inner bays' surface.

Sea Anemone Fish

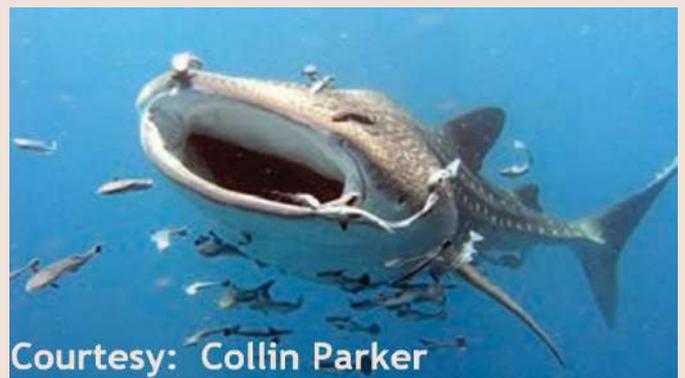


Courtesy: Ultimatereef.net

Like other clownfish and anemones, the endemic Seychelles anemone fish form symbiotic, or co-operative relationships with sea anemones and are unaffected by the stinging tentacles of the host anemones. The anemone protects the clownfish from predators, as well as providing food through the scraps left from the anemone's meals and occasional dead anemone tentacles. In return, the clownfish defends the anemone from its predators, and parasites.

Whale Shark

Historically they have been known to migrate through Baie Ternay each year between August and October, where these usually solitary animals form large feeding aggregations. Whale sharks can grow up to 40 feet (12 meters) long, but on average they grow to 18 to 32.8 feet (5.5 to 10 m) and weigh 20.6 tons (18.7 metric tonnes). That's about the size of a school bus.



Courtesy: Collin Parker



Feathertail Stingray

Rays are bottom feeders. They trap their prey on the seabed by setting themselves down and using their discs to move their prey into their mouth. Furthermore, they are usually solitary animals that can be found resting in sandy lagoons and seagrass meadows.



Courtesy: en.wikipedia.org

Pearl Bubble Coral

With a bubble-like appearance, these coral colonies are massive and form thick plates, with widely separated groves. They are usually found in cloudy reef environments; growing in protected areas, such as crevices.



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Lemon Shark

This inshore species of shark is usually associated with coral reefs and mangroves, and exhibit very little movement patterns. The shark have a preference for shallower waters with a mosaic of habitat patches during dawn and dusk ,where they forage for food.

